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Memorandum

PEIPING'S VIEWS ON "REVOLUTIONARY WAR"

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

SUMMARY

Peiping has persistently emphasized that its encouragement and support of "revolutionary" wars was not only an essential element in true Communist policy, but also a method of breaking through the US policy of containment and most specifically of securing US withdrawal from Taiwan. Thus the Chinese Communists have tried to bring "revolutionary" pressures to bear against US interests throughout the world. Peiping apparently believes it can continue this pressure without provoking a major US attack on the mainland. Even such an attack, in the Chinese view, could not destroy Peiping's ability to resist occupation. In Mao's doctrine tactical caution is wedded to strategic disdain of a superior enemy, raising the degree of risk Peiping is willing to take in confrontations with the US. In asserting their intention to preserve North Vietnam, however, the Chinese leaders have been indefinite as to the precise character and time of their action.

PEIPING'S VIEWS ON "REVOLUTIONARY WAR"

This paper attempts to give a perspective for gauging Chinese and Vietnamese action in the Vietnam situation. Our perspective is formed largely by the past attitudes and actions of the two Communist powers, and we believe that certain persisting attitudes will lead to much the same actions. In this connection, we believe that their dedication to the doctrine of revolutionary violence is real and not just verbal and it is primarily this matter which is discussed here.

1. The Basic Chinese Communist Attitude

The Chinese Communist effort to break through the American policy of military and political containment is as much a strategy for revolutionary war as it is a policy for handling foreign relations. That is, it apparently is conceived in terms of combating the enemy rather than in adjusting relations with him by negotiations; revolutionary wars against him are encouraged and supported, and any compromise or concession is viewed as surrender. It is here that the doctrinal component in Chinese Communist thinking significantly influences the nationalistic component in their view of strategy, adding to the morbid hostility. And this hostility distinguishes a Chinese Communist attitude toward the US from a traditional Chinese attitude. The attitude of the Russian Communists toward Washington is now significantly less hostile than that of the Chinese leaders, an underlying reason for this difference being Mao's very high--indeed, neurotic--opinion of himself as the world's senior leader dedicated to armed revolution. This mixture of conceit and conviction raises the anti-American animus in the thinking of the Chinese leaders above that of the Russian leaders.

It is raised even further by the fact that Mao is above all dedicated to a particular armed revolution--the Chinese revolution--which means for him nothing less than the process of destroying Nationalist China as a political unit. Revolutionary animosity against the Nationalist requires the same kind

of animosity against their defenders, the Americans. Chinese Communist criticism of the Russians carries the implication that a revolutionary attitude can be gauged only by the degree of hostility directed against the major defender of the Nationalists. Mao himself indicated that the matter of Nationalist China is relevant to the Sino-Soviet dispute regarding global strategy toward the US. He told a Japanese Communist leader on 23 November 1961 that the "immediate and pressing problem of Taiwan" made the difference between the Chinese and Soviet attitude toward US policy. His dedication, however, to violent revolution and his personal conceit probably play a major part in shaping his thinking on the dispute.

2. Chinese Communist Global Strategy

Chinese strategy is sharply directed toward the goal of effecting this American withdrawal from the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese tried to attain this goal in 1954-55 and again in 1958 by direct pressures on the Nationalist positions in the Strait. These pressures were intended to ascertain the degree of the US determination to support the Nationalists. Failure to reduce the US commitment to Taipei--on the contrary, it was significantly increased --compelled the Chinese Communist leaders to shift their strategy from confrontations or near-confrontations with the US in the Strait to a more indirect strategy requiring pressures on US positions elsewhere in the world. The shift to this strategy was made all the more necessary by Khrushchev's increasing reluctance to support further probes in the Strait and by the open polemics which erupted between the two Communist allies.

Among the elements which constitute the complex Chinese Communist strategy of applying pressures on the US, small wars ("armed struggle") in underdeveloped areas are the most distinctive. The Chinese (and other Asian Communists) have tried this strategy in the Far East in the late 1940s and early 1950s and failed to make headway anywhere but in Vietnam. They took a new approach in 1954-55, advancing along a "soft" line of peaceful coexistence and significantly de-emphasizing the use of small wars and overt incitement to violent revolution, but

in the subsequent period, U.S.-Chinese Communist talks regarding the Taiwan issue ended in an impasse. The compulsion to encourage violent revolutions against the U.S. was reactivated in Chinese Communist thinking by various domestic and international developments in 1957-58. The encouragement of "armed struggle" was firmly re-established as the key element in Peiping's strategy by April 1960, as witness their insistence then that the heart of Leninism was recognition of the "inevitability" of small revolutionary wars. But this time the idea was not confined to strategy in the Far East; it was extended to all emergent nations.

The explicit link between this global strategy and Peiping's basic long-term goal of effecting a U.S. withdrawal from the Taiwan Strait area was made by Chou En-lai. Speaking to Edgar Snow on 18 October 1960, Chou stated:

> The invasion and occupation of Taiwan can only make the U.S. the enemy of the Chinese people....
>
> Only when other countries have suffered similar acts of invasion and occupation will they become hostile toward the U.S., and only then will the people of these countries consider U.S. imperialism as their common enemy....
>
> Looking at the development of the overall situation /i.e., strategy/, even if the U.S. doesn't withdraw from the Taiwan region and no breakthrough occurs there, breakthroughs will occur elsewhere, leading also to a similar chain reaction so long as the U.S. Government persists in its present policies of aggression and war. Because in bullying and oppressing other peoples, the U.S. will inevitably arouse their opposition and suffer ultimate defeat. It is only a matter of time. As to where the breakthrough occurs first, this depends on the development of the struggle. (emphasis supplied)

"Breakthroughs...elsewhere" is a major component in Chinese Communist strategic thinking. Chou's remarks carry the implication that the U.S. can be most

effectively pressed to withdraw its commitments to Taipei and other governments by direct attacks on U.S. positions over a broad front, particularly in underdeveloped areas. Mao and Liu Shao-chi came close to making this point in private discussions with Latin American Communists in March 1959, when they stressed the importance of simultaneous actions which cause "tension" in order to force the U.S. "to spread its forces thin over a vast area." A similar point was made by Anna Louise Strong, whose views reflect aspects of the Chinese leaders' thinking. She stated in a memo in spring 1962 that: Khrushchev sees peace as secured by alternate threats and blandishments which he directs at Kennedy, plus the economic and nuclear power of the USSR. He wants 'maximum quiet' for all revolutionary movements. The Chinese, however, seek world peace secured by combined pressure of all anti-imperialist forces in the world, thwarting and holding down and overcoming imperialism bit by bit."

The Chinese prefer these anti-U.S. pressures to take the form of small wars apparently because they see local wars as providing the most direct kind of pressure and the most difficult kind for the U.S. to handle. They also apparently believe that an armed revolution offers the best opportunity to wipe out American influence with the governments of emergent nations. They sharply criticized the Algerian Communists privately in December 1962 for giving up their arms to Ben Bella's government forces, arguing that weapons were needed for the Communist revolution; the Chinese pointed to the danger that the Communist revolution would stagnate and Algeria would return to the imperialist orbit, becoming a "colony"--i.e., would emerge as a new nation susceptible to U.S. influence.

3. "Revolutionary War"

The Chinese Communist leaders have used one aspect of Lenin's ideas to buttress their contention that stress on armed revolution is doctrinally legitimate. They have returned to a statement in one of his pamphlets--"National wars against the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable, they are inevitable, they are progressive, and they are revolutionary."--to argue against the Russian leaders' more "peaceful road." The Chinese previously had

cited this same statement of Lenin's when they were encouraging and supporting armed revolutions in the Far East in the early 1950s.

The Chinese define "just" wars in the same way that the Russians do. "Just" wars are simply wars of national liberation waged by the people in the colonies or semi-colonies against imperialist oppression and enslavement, revolutionary civil wars of the proletariat in the imperialist countries, or wars of self-defense waged by the socialist countries against wars of oppression launched by imperialism." (Red Flag, 1 January 1962) The decisive point, however, is the Chinese emphasis on the small, "just" war as the only way to make a revolution in an underdeveloped country..

The Chinese emphasis in effect excludes all forms of revolution which are not armed revolutions. Chou En-lai made this clear when, in a conversation with Indian Communist leaders in October 1961, he came close to saying what other Chinese Communists had said regarding Khrushchev's removal of war from the arsenal of Communist weapons: namely, Communism can triumph only through armed revolution; Khrushchev's policies have already disrupted the world Communist movement, and all Communist parties should follow the road that the CCP took to power. The Chinese have raised Mao's idea of a guerrilla war to the level of a "law" of the process of revolution. The important editorial on the Congo rebellion carried in the Peiping People's Daily on 24 June 1964 makes this point clear:

> State power, independence, freedom, and equality can be won by armed force and armed force alone and safeguarded by armed force and armed force alone. This has been and is the universal law of class struggle.

Revolutionary wars, in the Chinese Communist view, are not only the most effective means of tying down and then eliminating U.S. influence in the emergent countries; they are also the best way to ensure the consolidation of power after a Communist takeover. Beyond that, the Chinese stress these wars in order to increase Mao's already considerable prestige as the guerrilla leader and Communist who creatively developed Leninist doctrine on revolutionary war.

They have made a sharp distinction between revolutionary wars--i.e., small, "just" wars--and world war. However, partly for polemical purposes, the Russians blur this distinction and insist that Mao wants big as well as small wars, including a major war. The Russians also blur this distinction and emphasize the dangers of "war" in general in order to avoid the necessity of committing themselves to small wars which might offer unacceptable risks to the USSR. They have cited as evidence for this position their version of his major speech given in Moscow in November 1957:

> In China, we are engaged in construction; we want peace. But, if the imperialists nevertheless impose a war, we shall have to clench our teeth, postpone construction, and resume it after the war. (Cited in Pravda, 21 September 1963) (emphasis supplied)

Ignoring the conditional "if" in Mao's statement, the Russians say that this indicates Mao's "orientation toward an armed conflict." They deliberately fail to point out, as Mao had pointed out, that the Chinese do not want a world (i.e., major) war with the U.S. unless it is absolutely unavoidable--that is, if it is "forced" on Peiping--in which case, the Chinese would have no alternative but to resist.

Chou En-lai, in a TV interview for Western audiences, stated in March 1964 that "We are perfectly clear that a nuclear world war would cause enormous havoc to mankind." "It is claimed that China is willing to lose half her population in a war. China will never provoke a war. But, should U.S. imperialism impose war on us, we would have no alternative but to resist firmly, and, whatever the cost, we would never surrender." (emphasis supplied)

4. Chinese Communist View of Risk of Small Wars

The Chinese apparently believe that they can support small anti-U.S. wars "elsewhere" and even adjacent to their borders without running the risk of provoking a major U.S. attack on the mainland. They believe they have a good understanding (which may include a degree of self-deception) of the extensive damage which a U.S. nuclear strike could cause

to mainland installations and morale. But this understanding has not led them to conclude that small wars in general, and in Laos and Vietnam in particular, should be avoided. They believe that these wars should be pushed "uninterruptedly" on a protracted time scale--in Laos, on a stop-go tactical basis, and in Vietnam, on a phased-increase hit-and-run basis. Their comrades, the Vietnamese Communists, are very explicit about their plan to wage protracted war and about how this will frustrate the impatient Americans, who want "lightning victory" and a war of "quick decision." This concept is rooted firmly in Mao's thinking on small wars, enabling Communists to take comfort in the long view despite tactical reverses.

When, in 1936, Mao said that "to wage a revolutionary war for 10 years, as we have done, might be surprising in other countries," he was rejecting Western military doctrine on quick-decision war and supplying Chinese Communist military thought with one of its most valuable concepts. It has been a key idea in Vietnamese Communist military thinking and meshes well with his other concept: "Absolute superiority exists only at the end of a war or campaign. It rarely exists at the outset."

Crucial to the Chinese view of risk is their apparently pervasive feeling that the U.S. will not use nuclear weapons against the mainland. The reasons for this feeling seem to be:

1. A major U.S. nuclear weapons strike against the mainland would be unpopular in the U.S. as well as in other countries. In their view, Americans are too "soft" to accept the presumed necessity of a U.S. - Chinese Nationalist long-term effort on the ground to secure the mainland after such a major strike.

Chou has made several remarks on the matter. In April 1957, he told Japanese Socialists that "Most Americans do not want to go to war. Why do they whose standard of living is so high have to engage in war? It is possible that they who are dwelling in concrete buildings and eating ice cream want to come to China to eat millet and put on straw sandals?....In view of this, we believe that the U.S. will never do such a

thing /I.e., attack the mainland/." Chou later (August 1964) pointed to criticism of U.S. allies and the U.S. "internal situation" as factors inhibiting the U.S. in expanding the war in Vietnam.

2. Destruction of the major cities and industrial complexes on the mainland would not mean defeat for the PLA. The Chinese attacked U.S. forces in Korea with an explicit recognition that the U.S. might hit the mainland with nuclear weapons; they apparently believe, however, that this would not destroy their ability to resist a military occupation.

Marshal Nieh Jung-chen told the Indian ambassador in October 1950 that: "We know what we are in for, but, at all costs, U.S. aggression has to be stopped. The Americans can bomb us, they can destroy our industries, but they cannot defeat us on land...They may even drop atom bombs on us. What then? They may kill a few million people...after all, China lives on farms. What can atom bombs do there?" Marshal Chen Yi made a roughly similar statement to a newsman in July 1964, insisting that the U.S. might "destroy cities like Shanghai and Peking with atom bombs," but that the U.S. could not occupy the mainland with military units.

3. Most importantly, the Chinese leaders have viewed U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons against them as containing a large element of bluff ("nuclear blackmail") and have made it a point of emphasis that small wars should be sustained despite direct or implicit U.S. threats. They seem to reason that their refusal over the years to bend in the face of threats has reduced the possibility of a U.S. nuclear weapons strike; others are urged to follow this reasoning and act on it.

Their post facto reading of the non-use of nuclear weapons during the Korean War seems to have increased their confidence that non-use will continue to be a US policy. (They have stated that during the Korean War, Washington believed that "the mere threat to use atom bombs would scare the peoples of Korea and China.... But they continued to stand upright in the face of the nuclear blackmail.... The only way of thwarting the nuclear bluff of the US is to have no fear of it." Red Flag, 1 January 1962.

Mao and his lieutenants have applied his civil war concept of despising a superior enemy strategically (persisting in fighting) while taking full account of him tactically (but fighting cautiously, not rashly) to the military aspects of Peiping's protracted anti-US effort. They believe that the task is effectively controlled in the tactical half of the formulation. They have taken this line--i.e., tactical caution--to justify their backdown in the Taiwan Strait situation of fall 1958.

Nevertheless, the policy has an ingredient of high risk: when an enemy is "slighted" in the long view (as Mao prefers), the inclination is to slight him in a particular tactical situation as well. Further, the enemy might well refuse to be tactically restrained in the use of his superior force. Mao has been criticized by the Soviet leaders for advancing an "adventurist" (high-risk) policy, their reasoning being:

> It is incompatible to slight the enemy strategically and take full account of him tactically at the same time. (Red Flag, October 1960, attributes this criticism to "some people.")

The Chinese reply has been that the Russians are "cowards"--i.e., they prefer a wider margin of safety in confrontations with the US than is really necessary.

Beyond the Chinese view that the mainland can be held against any US air strike--i.e., is inviolable even if the US attacks with nuclear weapons--is their view that forces actively engaged in small wars are even more secure against nuclear

weapons attacks. The Vietnamese Communists seem to share this view with them and have disparaged the feasibility of US use of tactical nuclear weapons effectively against their forces in South Vietnam. They seem to believe that the US will not use these weapons.

> ...because in the guerrilla war in South Vietnam, the opposing forces are locked together in close fighting and there are no definite front lines.... This is only the military side of the matter. As for the political...side, it is difficult for the US to estimate beforehand all the consequences of their eventual use of nuclear weapons to suppress the national liberation movement. (Hoc Tap, January 1964)

Use of nuclear weapons against North Vietnam is probably viewed by the Vietnamese leaders in the same way that the Chinese leaders see such an attack against the mainland--i.e., as capable of destroying cities and installations but not the PAVN's ability to fight. This concept of military inviolability and willingness to take losses ("make sacrifices," in Chinese and Vietnamese Communist jargon), sustains Vietnamese determination to persist in the war in South Vietnam despite US threats.

Courage ("nerve"), in the Chinese view, is an important ingredient in the current situation of confrontation with the US. It is a psychological factor which has military consequences and it has been recognized as such for many years by the Chinese. That is, they believe that the deterrent factor to be combined with the military factor is precisely boldness--i.e., a deliberate effort to convince the US that Communists are not afraid of running the risk of major war. A strain of this thinking appeared, among other materials, in Red Flag on 1 January 1962: "Dulles was mistaken...in thinking that by merely threatening to use atomic weapons in 1954, the US would succeed...in intimidating the people of the world in general and those of Indochina in particular." It appeared again in People's Daily on 4 March 1964: "US clamors to extend the war to the North can only frighten those who have lost their nerve." It appears today in Vietnamese Communist materials.

The Chinese response to U.S. threats in June 1964 and to the air strikes against North Vietnamese base facilities in August was to encourage the Vietnamese to continue the fighting in the South, as the U.S. "threat of force can intimidate no one" (People's Daily, 9 August 1964). The Soviets were intimidated, in the Chinese view; a Chinese Foreign Ministry official complained to a reliable source on 13 August that the U.S. air strikes had achieved one aim: "to cowdown the Soviet Union." That the Vietnamese had been encouraged to continue the fight in the South despite the strikes is suggested, among other things, by the Viet Cong broadcast of 7 August, stating that the Communist army in the South "considers itself responsible for stepping up the attack against, and the annihilation and destruction of, the enemy on all battlefields so as to contribute to the protection" of the North. Thus the important aspect of the Chinese-Vietnamese reaction was not so much Chinese statements regarding the degree of their commitment to help Hanoi, but Peiping's and Hanoi's determination to stiffen the backs of the Viet Cong.

The Chinese leaders have made clear their intention to preserve the viability of North Vietnam, using various formulations at various times. Following U.S. statements regarding possible escalation, Chen Yi told an Austrian newsman in late July 1964 that the PLA "would come in if the war in Indochina should be carried to the North," and on 20 July, Peiping declared: "The Chinese people will not watch with folded arms if its fraternal neighbor, the DRV, is under attack. This is a promise, and we have always kept our promises." In response to the first Gulf of Tonkin incident, the Chinese leaders issued a government statement on 6 August warning that the Chinese people "will not sit idly by" and that "aggression by the U.S. against the DRV means aggression against China." Shortly thereafter (in mid-August), a Foreign Ministry official stated privately that "We will totally oppose U.S. action and aggression against Vietnam which we consider as aggression against us." More recently, in commenting on Ambassador Taylor's consultations in Washington, the People's Daily (on 26 November) warned: "One should realize that if aggression is enlarged regardless under what label--limited or not very limited--this still constitutes an act of war

and a brazen attack on the DRV...All big aggressive wars in the world were begun with a limited label... Once an agressive neck has been stuck out,...it must be chopped off." In asserting their intention to preserve North Vietnam, however, the Chinese leaders have been indefinite as to the precise character and time of their action.